

Masonic Lodge
Hillsboro, Orange County
North Carolina

HABS No NC-268

HABS
NC
68-HILBO,
6 -

ORIGINAL
1968

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of North Carolina

Historic American Buildings Survey
Prepared at Headquarters Office for
M. R. Marsh, District Officer
509 Builders Building, Charlotte, N.C.

Eagle Lodge (Masonic Lodge, Masonic Hall;
King Street Opera House)
142 W. King Street
Hillsborough
Orange County
North Carolina

HABS No. NC-268.

Addendum to

Masonic Lodge
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey

Name of Structure: Eagle Lodge (Masonic Lodge ; Masonic Hall) Also called King Street Opera House for many decades in the 19th century .

Address: 142 W. King St., Hillsborough, Hillsborough Township, Orange County, North Carolina (Lot 23)

Present Owner: Eagle Lodge No. 19, A. F. & A. M. (Master, Wardens, and Members)
Masonic Hall, 142 W. King St.
Hillsborough, N. C.

Present Occupant: Eagle Lodge No. 19, A. F. & A. M.
Masonic Hall, 142 W. King St.
Hillsborough, N. C.

Present Use: Home of Eagle Lodge No. 19, A. F. & A. M., one of the state's most historic lodges (chartered in 1791).

Brief Statement of Significance: Eagle Lodge No. 19, A. F. & A. M.* chartered in 1791, built the building and has always occupied it. The site is one of the town's most historic bits of ground. On or very nearly on the site of the present Masonic Hall stood the notorious Edmund Fanning's house (see C. J. Sauthier's 1768 map of Hillsborough), cut from its sills by the Regulators in the uprising of Sept. 25, 1770. Fanning's house and lot was the target for much Regulator activity. When the Masonic Hall was built in 1823, it served as the town's lecture hall, concert hall, and auditorium for decades, housing all manner of civic activity. A notable occasion was the dinner on Sept. 7, 1944, following the laying of the cornerstone for the Old Courthouse; the Hall was used for concerts by the Nash and Kollock School; and as a center for aid of all kinds during the Civil War.

* After the Revolution, existing remnants of Masonic Lodges grouped themselves together in 1787 and met in Hillsborough July 23, 1788. A charter was issued to Eagle Lodge No. 19 in Hillsborough in December, 1791. The Lodge fell dormant in 1799 and was revived in 1819 with a new number, No. 71. The old number, No. 19, was restored to it in 1932.

Date of Erection: 1823
Cornerstone laid, November 23, 1823.
Dedicated, autumn of 1825 (exact date lost)

Architect: Capt. William Nichols, State Architect.

Builder, suppliers, etc.: John Berry, native brickmason-architect probably built the building. Samuel Hancock was the master brickmason of the area.

Original Plan, Construction, etc.: The building stands almost exactly as it was built, a severely simple cube, 40' in length, width, and height, with walls of solid brick, three bays to a side. As originally built, the roof was surmounted by a glassed-in observatory and a gallery with windows situated in the center of the roof. This structure leaked, causing the rafters to decay from moisture, and it was removed "after a few years," apparently in 1862, and the present hip roof was constructed. The building has its original portico with four white Ionic columns supporting a pediment, its original louvered shutters and double-leaved, panolled entrance doors. It is nearly always described as a "Greek Revival" building.

Physical History:

Original and Subsequent Owners:

1. No purchase deed exists for Edmund Fanning's acquisition of Lot 23. The 1768 Sauthier map of Hillsborough shows his house, outhouses, garden, and a well-developed orchard. He had thus evidently acquired and developed it soon after he came to Orange County. The house was wrecked by the Regulators on Sept. 25, 1770. Finally, Fanning fled to New York, and his property was confiscated by the new State of North Carolina. (See Deed Book 3, 29; DB 4, 3; also DB 4, 723...the same deed repeated with slight variations.)
2. Aug. 25, 1786 (Deed Book 4, 3) - Lot 23, a part of Edmund Fanning's confiscated property....."sold at public vendue to the sd. William Lytle" (i. e., Dr. William Lytle) for 1022 pounds. (Note: This was a year of inflation.)
3. October 6, 1798 (DB 7, 328-330) - William Lytle, Esq., sells lots 23, 33, and 24 (the western half) "together with all and singular the Houses, buildings, and inclosures.....etc." to William Norwood for \$800.
4. February 17, 1824 (DB 21, 500-501) - William Norwood sells Lots 23 and 33 to Eagle Lodge No. 71 for \$1000 with a special provision "that William Huntington his heirs and assigns shall.....possess & enjoy the right....of taking water from the Well in the said Lott Number twenty-three," etc., etc.

Note: The cornerstone was laid and the building of Masonic Hall begun before the land was actually conveyed by William Norwood to Eagle Lodge No. 71. This was not at all an unusual practice in Hillsborough (cf. St. Matthew's Episcopal Church).

Notes on Alterations and Additions:

The Masonic Hall for many years had the problem of a leaking roof. The original glassed-in observatory and gallery were removed in 1862, and the present hip roof installed. There have been constant roof repairs, however. In 1903 a new shingle roof was installed; in 1908 steel shingles replaced the wooden ones; but in 1912 and in 1918 there were repairs. Finally, in 1922-23, a satisfactory (40-lb.) tin roof was installed, and this has been painted at intervals.

The Lower Room has had many window glasses broken over a long period of time. In 1873 some 49 panes were replaced, and there have been other large replacements. In January, 1888, a heater was installed; in 1916 the Hall was wired for electricity; in 1927 the large fireplace was bricked up and closed; in 1936, the portico was painted and repaired; and in 1936 also water and plumbing fixtures were installed.

Although there is no mention of it in available records, it is apparent that a coat of red paint was applied to the exterior brick work, probably in the late 19th century; but this has now weathered to an extremely pleasing soft rosy color which contrasts beautifully with the green louvered shutters and the white Ionic portico.

Nichols' original plans have not yet come to light, but it is more than likely that they exist.

Historical Events Connected with Structure: Masonic Hall stands on the historic site (Lot 23) of the notorious Edmund Fanning's "fine house"; later it was the home of the literate and cultured Lytles, Dr. William and his sons Archibald (a splendid Greek scholar who owned a fine classical library) and Robert; still later it was owned by William Norwood, Scottish lawyer and judge who married James Hogg's daughter, Robina, and became one of Hillsborough's most prominent citizens.

Eagle Lodge No. 71 was empowered by an Act of the General Assembly in 1820 to conduct "one or more lotteries to raise a sum of money not exceeding \$3000" with which to build Masonic Hall. The Hillsborough Recorder's early issues chronicle the many delays and difficulties encountered in the conduct of the lottery which actually existed from 1821 to 1832. Eagle Lodge has supported many historic organizations and laid the cornerstones for many of the State's most historic buildings.

Important Old Views: Postal card series (in possession of Hillsborough Historical Society).
(with location)

Sources of Information: (1) C. J. Sauthier's 1768 Map of Hillsborough; (2) Deed Books of Orange County in Orange County Courthouse, Hillsborough, N. C.; (3) Interview with Master of Eagle Lodge No. 19, Mr. John Roberts; (4) Hugh Leflor and Paul Wagon, eds., Orange County, 1752-1952 (Chapel Hill: The Orange Printshop, 1953). Chapter XVIII by Wallace E. Caldwell, "Fraternal Orders in Orange County," pp. 318-320 (Eagle Lodge discussed, picture of the interior); (5) Ruth Blackwelder, The Age of Orange (Charlotte, William Loftin, 1961), Eagle Lodge pictured and mentioned, passim. (6) Robert B. Studebaker, History of Eagle Lodge....Hillsboro, N. C. 1791-1937, (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1937). Contains many references to building and gives three views of the Upper Room (or Lodge Room) and an exterior view. (7) The Hillsborough Recorder (remarkably complete files in North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC, Chapel Hill, N. C.) - contains many advertisements and notes on the Masonic Lottery, etc.